
The 2014 Annual Report

of the City of Columbus – Housing Authority

City of Columbus





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This Annual Report is prepared for the citizens of the City of Columbus and the 2014 public officials:

Columbus Mayor:

The Honorable Kristen Brown

Columbus City Council:

*Dascal Bunch
Ryan Brand
Frank Jerome
Frank Miller
Tim Shuffett
Aaron Hankins
Jim Lienhoop*

Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority:

<i>Dascal Bunch-City liaison</i>	<i>Term ends</i>		<i>Term ends</i>
<i>Jim Keller-Chairman</i>	<i>12/2014</i>	<i>Gary Gossett</i>	<i>retiring 9/2013</i>
<i>Beth Stroh</i>	<i>12/2014</i>	<i>Graziella Bush-vice Chair</i>	<i>12/2015</i>
<i>Lester Burbink</i>	<i>12/2016</i>	<i>Amy Kaiser</i>	<i>12/2015</i>
<i>Jennifer Ruse-tenant</i>	<i>12/2014</i>		



Executive Summary

Director Role

As Executive Director I oversee operations and activities of all Columbus Housing Authority business. The ED is responsible to the CHA Board of Commissioners for planning, direction and implementation of all programs and policies of the agency and attends each meeting acting as Secretary of the Board of Commissioners. Work as ED involves problem solving, long and short term planning; development of policy and procedures; approval and preparation of budgets and reports; and supervision of good internal controls to ensure that the agency's systems are accurate, efficient and in accordance with professional and governmental standards and regulations.

The ED also presides as hearing officer for applicants and tenants grieving a decision by staff in both Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Public Housing (PH). In 2013, I upheld the denial of 19 applicants and overturned the denial of 25 applicants. Regarding hearings for tenants of each program: Section 8 HCV--14 terminations were upheld and 11 terminations were overturned; Public Housing--4 terminations were upheld, 4 terminations were overturned. Three Public Housing *formal hearings* were conducted by Law Judge Merlyn Bartlett.

Department Overview

The Columbus Housing Authority has 14 staff members. The following list acknowledges those staff members along with their titles:

Deborah Holt – Executive Director

Donald Wood – Finance Administrator

Melisa Ison – Lead Administration

Jill Sharp – Public Housing Manager

Jill Swain – Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator (FSS)

Rebecca Tibbs – Receptionist/Administration to PH and FSS Supervisors

Stella Collins-Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Supervisor

Jane Coquerille-Section 8 Case Manager

Janie Ahlbrand-Section 8 Case Manager

Julie Malson-Housing Quality Standards Inspector/Receptionist

Steve Zink – Public Housing Facility Manager

Doug Sweeney – Lead Technician

Joe Hinson-Technician

Jenny Hampton-Renovator/Lawn



Policy Changes

Resolution 1-02212013-Board approves CHA's FY2014 budget with 3% salary increase to staff.

(On 05202013 Board rescinded 3% increase and changed to 2% due to sequestration and budget cuts)

Resolution 2-07182013-bed bug policy added to Public Housing Tenant Handbook to address prevention and treatment.

Resolution 3-07182013A-Revise Section 8 HCV/Public Housing Admin Policies re: sex offenders. New rule—if the applicant has *ever been required to register* as a sex offender the applicant will be denied housing assistance.

Resolution 4-08152013-Board approves to submit the Section 8 Management Assessment Program to HUD. Department scored highest score possible—150 pts., receiving bonus points for deconcentration of poverty.

Resolution 5-10172013-Payment Standards and Utility Allowances-Fair market rents (FMRs) were 95% in 2012-2013. HUD increased FMRs, thereby increasing rents in the City. CHA decided to change our payment standards to 90% which results in CHA paying slightly less towards the tenant rent and the tenant pays more. However, in doing this, the tenants are allowed to qualify for a higher contract rent allowance. The increase was \$54 for 1bedroom total tenant payment.

Resolution 6-11212013 Revised preferences for waiting list to read: First priority served—"living, working, or attending school in Bartholomew Co. and be a Veteran"...second priority served—living working or attending school in Bartholomew Co. Previously the priority was: *Living, working, or attending school in Bartholomew Co, and Veteran, elderly, or disabled.* .

2013 Accomplishments

Agency Wide

*Section 8 HCV program scored 150 maximum points for SEMAP 2013-(HUD management assessment).

*Excellent Audit for CHA's FY 2013 (7/1/2012-6/30/2013)--13 consecutive years *with no audit findings*.

*2013-Collections of bad debt from Section 8HCV/\$12,512; Public Housing/\$9,464. Tenants cannot get back on either program until the debt is paid in full.

*Since July 2005 COLLECTIONS RECOVERED: from Section 8HCV-\$80,174---- from PH \$76,525

Employee Retirement/Insurance

CHA revised retirement for current full time employees from a previous 401K plan to a Simple IRA.

Public Housing

*Homework with an Officer-2nd year has grown from attendance of 5 children at Pence Place to over 23 children weekly meeting with uniformed officers to do homework, tutor, and make friends!



*In April 2013, Public Housing won a Women's Giving Circle grant of \$1,000 for homework supplies, snacks and drinks.

*12 month Public Housing leases working well (revised in 2012 from month to month). This change has helped stabilize the PH developments and encourage tenants to 'think' before giving up their housing.

*Healthy Communities helped Heritage Woods and Sycamore Place with their Community Gardens. Families learned how to plant, tend and harvest their own food; they are also helping at Sycamore Place with smoking cessation. This is a long-term commitment to Sycamore tenants to improve their health.

*Summer of 2013 CHA Maintenance completed overseeing construction of the 2012 CDBG award of over \$95,000. Pence Place windows were being replaced with energy efficient windows in all 40 units.

2013 PILOT- \$20,860 'payment in lieu of taxes' grant was completed the fall of 2013 with 7 furnaces and AC units replaced with 92% efficiency furnaces at Heritage Woods and Scattered Sites. Many of the original furnaces had been in place nearly 31 years.

*New CPD Officer Paul Garnett and his wife, Sarah, have moved to a Heritage Woods apartment as a resident police officer. HUD allows PHAs to offer free rent to police, fire and emergency workers for living and parking their 'duty' cars on property and providing additional security to the developments. CPD officer LaShaun Tyler has lived at Pence Place for several years.

*Regarding evictions or move outs in 6 months-7/13 through 12/13 there have been 7 evictions, 3 purchased homes, 5 voluntarily withdrew, 1 deceased, 2 transferred to other CHA units due to family size---18 total.

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

*Sept. 2013 Section 8 submitted FY2013 SEMAP (Management Assessment) to HUD. The department scored 150 pts.-highest possible score- receiving bonus points for staff efforts to avoid concentrations of poverty in neighborhoods. Staff council tenants about the advantages of living in more progressive, developed neighborhoods, such as easier access to better schools and parks, and close proximity to shopping and essential services.

*Only 1 rent abatement occurred in 2013. When a landlord refuses to make a Housing Quality Standard repair, CHA 'abated' the landlord's portion of rent until the item is fixed. If the landlord refuses to make the repair, the tenant may look for another unit to rent.

*Serious funding issues: Section 8 HCV is the larger CHA program. Currently, 625 applicant households are on its waiting list. HUD's funding methods are not typical accounting. HUD has allotted CHA 654 vouchers. HUD calculates a PHAs funding by the amount of money budgeted by Congress, not the cost of rental subsidy multiplied by number of vouchers. CHA estimates *current HUD funding will only allow* 525-550 households, based on average current rents. This is an ever-fluctuating number due to markets and economy, as well as funding. Staff has worked very hard this past year to stretch funding in the



Section 8 HCV program without having to recall any vouchers. The tricky balance is leasing enough vouchers to satisfy HUD's requirements AND having enough money to cover the cost of rents. Admin fees (funding used to pay staff & operating costs) are based on unit months leased. Therefore, lower UML equals lower admin fees to cover administrative expenses.

*In October, Section 8 increased *payment standards* (amount CHA could allow for particular units). In doing this, the tenant may have paid slightly more rent out of pocket but were afforded the opportunity to upgrade their rental unit.

*6 new landlords were added to the Section 8 Landlord List in 2013.

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

*CHA was awarded another year of HUD's FSS Grant 2013-2014. This grant pays the salary and benefits for a Coordinator for Family Self-Sufficiency. Even though this program has been operating at CHA for 19 years, CHA must compete each year for the funding.

*The FSS Coordinator's goal is to encourage participants to have attainable goals, become self-sufficient, earn more income, and manage their family and daily life in a constructive, healthy manner. Housing rental amounts are based on income. Escrow in the FSS program is earned by increasing income. The increased amount of rent is 'set aside' in an escrow account but the tenant continues to pay the lower amount of rent. In 2013, there were 6 5-year graduates. \$50,330 was awarded in escrow.

70% of the participants are employed. One family received \$17,947.35, the highest escrow ever awarded! One graduate became a homeowner. 5 participants graduated early from the program because they reached full HUD rent. All of the 6 graduates no longer receive housing assistance, have maintained suitable employment and have established working budgets.

*2013 FSS received a Grant-A Wish from Heritage Fund for \$900. In 2014 the program has been awarded \$95 plus a \$95 match. This grant will be used for emergency needs of FSS Participants such as car repairs, etc.

*The FSS Advisory Board has a new President, Dara Shumaker, who is a previous participant in the program, and several new Board Members. The Board has changed to monthly meetings with an array of new goals/projects to begin in 2014.

*FSS now has a FACEBOOK page that is only available to FSS Participants.

*The School Supply program provided school supplies to 1,194 children in 2013. This program began in Columbus over 10 years ago as an FSS project. It has now become an important event in the community.



Heritage Woods Phase II

Located on 9th Street, Heritage Woods Phase II is a 22 unit apartment complex adjacent to Heritage Woods, owned by Columbus Housing Finance Corp. with property managed by Columbus Housing Authority. This development was previously a LIHTC and has now satisfied its federal requirements. It is a market rate apartment complex with rents of \$550 per month for a 2bedroom townhouse. The loan was refinanced in 2013 to take advantage of lower interest rates and will be paid off in 7 years.

Challenges

Funding: HUD Funding 2013

S8 Housing Assistance Payments	\$2,569,408
S8 Admin. Fees	341,564
PH-Operating Subsidy	335,986
PH-Capital Fund Prg.	<u>192,013</u>
Total funding rec'd 2013	\$3,438,971

*****For 2014, HUD anticipates a 4% funding increase from the 2013 Post Sequestration levels.***

However, several factors determine actual funding amounts such as rental income, proration percentage, and occupancy levels. CHA has not been notified about specific funding amounts in any of these areas.

Waiting List

Public Housing and Section 8 HCV waiting lists are fairly equal in size because many families apply to both lists. However, for several years now we have realized only about 1/3rd of the applicants follow through to receive housing, meaning 2/3rds drops off the waiting list for various reasons. CHA has tried to make positive improvements to keep the waiting list as current as possible by conducting updates biannually to make sure addresses are up-to-date. We offer to make email contact rather than postal mail if needed, and we add emergency contacts when the applicant moves frequently. In a 6 month period of 110 Section 8 applicants, 22 did not respond, 41 were leased (37%), 19 went back to the waiting list due to extenuating circumstances (medical, in a lease, can't afford now, etc.), 2 were a no-show, 2 were denied due to drugs, 3 let their voucher expire after given 90-120 days to locate a unit, 10 are still looking, 3 listed as interviewed but not issued voucher, 2 voluntarily withdrew, 2 didn't respond to interview. Public Housing pulled 62 applicants during the same period. 12 were leased (19%), 11 went back to the waiting list due to extenuating circumstances, 21 didn't respond, 1 no show, 8 voluntarily withdrew, 5 are still working through the process, and 4 were denied due to drugs, evictions, violence or poor rental history. Much of this process is required by HUD, but it's also very labor-intensive with many rules to make sure every applicant has an equal opportunity in housing.



Ethnicities of applicants 7/1-12/31/2013

Section 8 HCV had 302 on the waiting list. 257 white (85%), 30 black (10%), 2 Asian, 4 Black/White, 4 Hispanic, 1 Hispanic/White, 2 other, and 2 declined. 115 households were elderly or disabled (38%); and of there were 298 children in these 302 households.

Public Housing had 257 on the waiting list. 219 White (85%), 23 Black (9%), 2 Asian, 4 Black/White, 3 Hispanic, 2 other, 2 declined, 1 mixed Native American/Alaskan Native, 1 White/Hispanic, 86 households were Black/White elderly or disabled (33%) and there were 254 children in these 257 households.

*CHA will continue outreach to all areas of the Columbus community for housing assistance.

Homeownership Program

CHA originally had 6 Homeownership units. To date, 1 has been lost to foreclosure, 2 to voluntarily withdrawing from the program and, 3 homeowners still participate in the program. All 3 mortgages are up to date on their loans. One family is in the process of giving up their home due to the severity of their disability.

Appointments

There have been no new hires for CHA. CHA's main receptionist left in December 2013. We have chosen not to hire a replacement but have moved admin staff to cover the position. December 2013 board meeting re-elected Jim Keller as Board Chair and Graziella Bush as Vice-Chair.



Heritage Woods Main Office



Heritage Woods Gardening





Sycamore Place





Pence Place



Pence Place (view from 9th Street Park)





Pence Place Homework With An Officer

